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Admit Helms probed on perjury

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WASHINGTON — A top White House official confirmed Thursday publicly for the first time that former CIA Director Richard M. Helms is under investigation for alleged perjury before two Senate committees.



RICHARD M. HELMS

Further, Robert Lipshutz, counsel to the President, disclosed that the White House must decide how much classified information is to be furnished federal prosecutors pursuing the case.

Helms, according to published reports, has threatened that if he is indicted and tried as a result of the investigation, he will "take some other people with him."

The Wilmington (Del.) News Journal reported Feb. 13 that Helms has told CIA officials and others that if he is indicted he will name former Sec. of State Henry A. Kissinger as the man who ordered him to lie. Helms has not denied the report.

Another journalist, Washington columnist Tom Braden, himself a former CIA official, has pointed out in print that Kissinger would have had no authority to give Helms such an order unless it was backed up by the President.

Thus, the case could touch former Presidents Richard M. Nixon and Gerald R. Ford, because it involves allegations that Helms perjured himself in 1973, and again in 1975.

The Justice Department has denied the Wilmington newspaper's report that indictments are imminent in the case and has not even admitted the probe is under way.

But privately, government sources have conceded there is a grand jury investigation growing out of reports that the CIA, in partnership with such multinational corporations as the International Telephone and Telegraph Corp. spent millions trying to bribe officials and political parties in Chile.

In 1973, the Senate subcommittee on multinational corporations began to look into

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such charges, including an allegation that ITT funnelled \$350,000 to opponents of the late Salvadore Allende, Chile's Marxist president.

In 1975, the same matters came under scrutiny of the Senate intelligence committee.

Both committees took testimony on the matter from Helms, who headed the CIA from 1966 to 1973, and from ITT president Harold Geneen. Now the federal grand jury is investigating charges that the two lied and possibly co-ordinated their statements.

Speculation has been fueled by the announcement, without explanation, that Geneen would relinquish his \$700,000-a-year job as president of ITT at the end of the year.

Lipshutz' almost offhand admission came during a Thursday breakfast with reporters when he said his White House legal office is representing the President in juggling prosecutors' demands that other executive branch agencies yield classified information as evidence for the grand jury.